

Persevere In The Faith.

Text: Heb 12:1-6

1) Removing Obstacles

Suggested Hymns:

2) Look To Jesus

603, 166, 340, 341, 349

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Hebrews 12:1-6, ¹ *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

³ *For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. ⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Our Saviour has declared in Matthew 24:13, ¹³ ***“But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”***

Today is Palm Sunday and we are reminded of the people praising Jesus and hailing Him as King. But it only took a few days before they were saying Crucify Him! Crucify Him!

Believing for a while and then falling away is not going to save anybody. But believing to the end, persevering in faith, that is what saves.

Hence Satan is bitterly opposed to persevering faith. Peter writes to us Christians, ⁸ *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*¹ When does the devil succeed in devouring a Christian? Is it not when he succeeds in robbing him of his faith? It certainly is!

Hence the apostle goes right on and states, ⁹ *Resist him, steadfast in the faith.* The Bible is full of such warnings and admonitions. It tells of the many Israelites who were journeying toward the promised land but who succumbed to Satan's temptations and were overthrown in the wilderness.

The Bible tells us these things for our warning. We read in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, ¹ *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.*

⁵ *But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.*

⁷ *And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition,*

The Bible also tells of the Galatians, who "*ran well*" but then were "*hindered from obeying the truth.*" "*You have fallen from grace,*" the apostle says.² And to the Corinthians the apostle writes in 1 Corinthians 10:12, ¹² *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

Yes, it is quite possible for a Christian to fall from the faith and lose his salvation. Only the person who endures to the end will be saved.

The Bible not only warns and admonishes us with respect to these things, but it also encourages.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are told of a multitude of ancient believers who by the grace of God overcame every obstacle, every temptation, even the mightiest hindrance, and endured in the faith to the end. That is encouraging to us, is it not? Yes, by the grace of God we, too, can endure in the faith in spite of everything.

And our text reminds us of these ancients and bids us to follow their shining example and persevere in the faith. Our text says, *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.* May the Lord bless our meditation as we consider persevering in the faith.

1. Persevering In The Faith Removing Obstacles

A Christian's life here on earth may be compared to a race toward a highly desirable goal. The goal of our race is heaven, where Jesus has gone before us. If we want to win that race, we must run with endurance, and with perseverance. We must run to the very end.

We must not grow weary and faint and lie down on the way. If anything would hinder us, weigh us down or impede our progress, we must lay it aside. Imagine a runner in the Olympic games wearing an overcoat and a pair of boots! Could he win a race? Certainly not!

Therefore we must lay aside every weight, every unnecessary burden, everything that would interfere with our reaching the blessed goal.

Does our business engross us that we have no time for the more important things of the kingdom of heaven, no time for daily Bible reading and family devotions, no time for regular church attendance, no time for work for the kingdom of God?

Do our family activities and our pleasures, which may be perfectly harmless in themselves, interfere with the higher things of life? Remember Luke 14:18-20, ¹⁸ *“But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to*

him, *'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'*¹⁹ *"And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.'*²⁰ *"Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'*

Lay these weights aside and run the race. Would Abraham be the "father of believers" if his love for Isaac or his attention to his business, which was flourishing, had exceeded his love for God and his desire for heaven? Therefore away with every weight that would impede your progress toward the heavenly goal.

Especially let us lay aside the weight of sin, sin in general and those sins in particular to which we are especially inclined. Money, perfectly harmless in itself, may become an awful drag in the heavenly race; yes, it may prove our undoing through our falling in love with it.

We read in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, *⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Hear the rich young man saying to Jesus, *"Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* but on hearing the Lord's reply, he turned away sorrowful, because he had great riches.³ See the rich man clothing himself with purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day and then — lifting up his eyes in hell.⁴ How many people are walking in this man's steps today!

Not so the cloud of witnesses mentioned in our text. Some of them *"had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented --.... They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth."*⁵ — all this that they might win in the race for the heavenly goal.

Shall we be unwilling to sacrifice lesser things in our effort to reach heaven? God forbid. Remember, *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to*

save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵
*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself
destroyed or lost?*⁶

But how shall we ever succeed in doing this? Is our own strength sufficient for this gigantic task? By no means. We must look to Jesus.

2. Look To Jesus, The Author And Finisher Of Our Faith.

Jesus earned salvation for us by fulfilling the Law in our stead and by receiving the punishment that we deserved through His bitter suffering and death. And oh, how bitter that was! He endured the cross, the cruel, cruel cross, and despised, regarded not, the shame attached to that cross. On the contrary, He spurned it and said with respect to it, *“I delight to do Your will, O my God.”*⁷ That will, was that He would endure that cross with all its cruelty and with all its shame.

But Jesus not only earned salvation for us but He offers it to us in the Gospel and creates the faith whereby we receive it. Jesus is the Author of our faith. And He is the Finisher of it, He keeps us in the faith unto our end.

Let us look to Jesus when we grow weak and weary, when a weight that is burdening us proves too heavy, when a temptation proves too strong. Let us look to Him for help. By looking to Jesus we shall not only receive forgiveness for our failures in the past, but we shall receive strength to continue the race.

His example will inspire us and move us mightily to follow His steps. Consider how patient, how enduring He was in the face of all obstacles. Consider how He endured such hostility of sinners against Himself. His disciples forsook Him, one of them denied Him, another betrayed Him, the chief priests and scribes reviled Him, the soldiers tortured Him, and others tempted Him to come down from the cross.

But Jesus endured all with infinite patience. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

We have not suffered such things. Our text says that *‘You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.* Our affliction is light compared with

His. And not only that, it not only differs from His in degree, but it differs in kind.

In His suffering Jesus endured God's wrath and fiery indignation, which was the punishment of our sin. However our suffering is sent to us in love, to chasten and purify us and draw us closer to our Father's bosom, for we are children of God.

When the Lord chastens us, He deals with us as with children and says, as written in our text, ***“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”*** How gladly we should follow Jesus' example and run with endurance the race that is set before us!

Finally, let us consider that having endured the cross with all its shame and all its suffering in preference to the joy He might have had by evading the cross, He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For whom did He do that? Solely for His own good? No, for ours.

Now Jesus says in John 14:2-3, ***I go to prepare a place for you. ³ “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.***

Oh, then, let us lift up the inert hands, and strengthen the feeble knees, and make straight paths for our feet. And let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Then, when our race is ended and we have reached the goal and are set down at the Saviour's side in glory, how happy we shall be.

Let us conclude with the words of Psalm 126, ***² Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great things for them.” ³ The LORD has done great things for us, And we are glad.***

Lord, give us a persevering faith. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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- ¹ 1 Peter 5:8
 - ² Gal. 5:4b, 7
 - ³ Mark 10:17, 22
 - ⁴ Luke 16:19-31
 - ⁵ Hebrews 11:36-38
 - ⁶ Luke 9:23-25
 - ⁷ Psalm 40:8